

23 December 1974

The Failures of Soviet Foreign Policy

It is undeniable that the USSR's international position has vastly improved over the three decades since World War II. The Soviet Union now presides over a socialist empire, has become one of the world's two superpowers, enjoys substantial influence in Western Europe and the Middle East, and has some voice in most other regions. These gains are, in very large measure, the product of the USSR's growing military power. Where Soviet foreign policy has had to operate beyond the limits of this military power, its record has been marked by numerous failures.

In Eastern Europe, Moscow has found no basis for maintaining its alliance except military occupation. Yugoslavia and Albania, free of Soviet forces, soon freed themselves of Soviet control. Romania, having negotiated Soviet troops out of the country in the 1950s, has subsequently become a perennial problem for Moscow. Soviet troops had to be reintroduced into Czechoslovakia in 1968 and remain the fundamental factor securing the obedience of that country, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany. The USSR has not been able to build a genuine political loyalty or a sense of shared objectives in this region.

In Asia, Moscow has suffered a defeat of the first magnitude. It has been unable to prevent China's change from key ally to major opponent, and the clumsiness of its own policies in the late 1950s even contributed to this process. In any open political system, it would have been Moscow which was torn apart over the question: who lost China? This failure has had many ramifications: North Korea and North Vietnam have been able to follow independent policies; Soviet influence has been blocked in the belt of states lying between Vietnam and India.

Soviet foreign policy toward Japan has been particularly unsuccessful; in part because of a refusal to give up a few trivial islands in the Kuriles, Moscow ranks far below Washington and Peking in its influence upon Japan and, indeed, is little better off now than it was right after the war.

In Western Europe, fifteen years after Khrushchev called it a "bone in my throat" that could not be tolerated, West Berlin stands free deep inside East Germany. In retrospect, it seems almost incredible that the USSR has been unable to translate its overwhelming local predominance of force into anything better than the present Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin. Soviet relations with West Germany, France, and Italy have improved, but the USSR is still regarded with distaste and suspicion in Western Europe. The local Communist parties are dubious assets: the closer the Italian party comes to legitimate political power, the more it distances itself from the USSR; the bigger the vote that the French party obtains, the cooler other Frenchmen grow toward Moscow.

In the Middle East, the USSR has created a substantial position for itself. This position, which is almost entirely dependent upon the Soviet role as arms supplier to the Arabs, is unstable on several counts. It is largely dependent upon continued Arab-Israeli conflict, and would erode if a settlement were reached. Furthermore, it is subject to the vicissitudes of local Arab politics, as evidenced in the unceremonial ejection of Soviet military units from Egypt in 1972. Soviet arms, supplied on a large scale and unlikely to be repaid, proved insufficient in 1967 and only a little better in 1973. Meanwhile the USSR has established no base of real basis of friendship in the area, has earned precious little gratitude from its clients, has made virtually no headway in the conservative Arab states, and plays no role in its oil policies.

In India, the USSR has done well. Its progress has rested on one wise choice: to back India against Pakistan. Nevertheless, although the Soviets stand better in New Delhi than do other major powers, the concrete benefits have been small. Despite repeated requests, India still refuses to provide shore facilities to the Soviet Navy. In framing its position on international issues, India pays some attention to Soviet sensitivities, but by and large follows its own interests. Meanwhile Moscow has fallen into the role of an aid supplier who is increasingly seen as tight-fisted.

The Soviets are still largely excluded from the Western Pacific. They enjoy little standing in the Philippines or Australia. They suffered a major disaster, from which they have not recovered, in Indonesia when the fall of Sukarno cost them their entire position in that country, despite a previous military aid program of major scale.

Two decades of effort in Africa have left the Soviets with positions in Somalia and Guinea that are limited and subject to the durability of individual local leaders. Moscow has already seen such gains evaporate overnight in the case of Ghana, where its investment was considerable. Most of its other efforts, such as the attempt to exploit the Nigerian civil war, have come to very little, and the level of activity has now slacked off, amounting primarily to the maintenance of competition with China in individual African countries. The entire trauma of the black liberation movements in Southern Africa, despite the obvious strains and vulnerabilities it entailed, has not yielded to Soviet policy interventions.

Latin America remains an area in which the Soviets have achieved only peripheral and spotty gains, with Chile standing forth as a notable loss. The exception is Cuba, which is a mixed blessing for the USSR. Cuba was the occasion and the scene of the USSR's most critical cold war defeat; the missile crisis of 1962. Economically, it is a burdensome responsibility. Cuban Communism has cost the USSR over \$400 billion in aid, plus another billion in subsidized sugar purchases; aid today is running a little under \$1 million a day. Politically, it is rewarding to have achieved a Communist foothold in the Western Hemisphere, but nothing has come of early Soviet hopes that this would set off a succession of advances in Latin America. On the strategic side, Cuba has not contributed to Soviet naval capabilities to the degree that was originally expected (because of US reactions).

All told, Soviet foreign policy during the postwar period has shown no special brilliance. Perhaps its major successes have come in Western Europe, which has formally accepted the USSR's overlordship in Eastern Europe (including East Germany) and treats Moscow as a responsible and legitimate interlocutor. But here as elsewhere the USSR still lacks true allies; its

ideology remains largely unattractive to the rest of the world; as a country it is feared, admired to some extent, but generally unloved and distrusted. It has thus been forced to rely primarily on the reach of its military power for an extension of its influence abroad. This limitation will not be easily overcome.

Routing Slip

Executive Registry

74-7896/1

TO:

		ACTION	INFO.			ACTION	INFO.
1	DCI			11	LC		
2	DDCI			12	IG		
3	S/MC			13	Compt		
4	DDS&T			14	Asst/DCI		
5	DDI			15	AO/DCI		
6	DDA 45			16	Ex/Sec		
7	DDO			17			
8	D/DCI/IC			18			
9	D/DCI/NIO	✓		19			
10	GC			20			

SUSPENSE

Date

Remarks:

1. Thanks - Yes -
2. See clip - \$400 billion?
3. You left out
Congo/Zaire '65 effort -
4. Isn't the "export"
of insurgency via the 6
worth mentioning as a
specific cost? -

DCI/DDCI

12/20/74

FOR THE RECORD FILE 8-17.3

Executive Registry

74-7096

23 December 1974

W
MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Colby

Here are some thoughts on the failures of postwar Soviet foreign policy, as requested by Senator Nunn. I presume you will want George Carey to pass them along.


National Intelligence Officer
for USSR/EE

Attachment

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